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Report of the Secretary-General on inter-mission cooperation and possible cross-border operations between the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. In my 19 March 2004 report on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (S/2004/228), I indicated my intention to submit recommendations to the Security Council concerning mechanisms and activities that could be introduced to facilitate inter-mission cooperation and cross-border operations between the three United Nations peacekeeping missions in the West Africa subregion, namely UNAMSIL, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Such mechanisms would aim to enhance a subregional approach in implementing the respective mandates of the three missions. In the same report, I identified a number of possible areas of inter-mission cooperation and cross-border activities, such as the sharing of assets among the missions; joint planning on issues pertaining to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; cross-border liaison and information sharing by United Nations military observers; "hot pursuit" operations by peacekeeping forces; joint air patrolling; shared border responsibilities; and the possible establishment of a subregional reserve force and a regional joint mission analysis cell for the three missions. As many of the identified cross-border and inter-mission operations would have complex legal, political and operational implications, I requested UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI, in consultation with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), to conduct a study of these issues. The Security Council, in its presidential statement of 25 March 2004 (S/PRST/2004/7), expressed its intention to consider my recommendations regarding the issue of inter-mission cooperation.

2. The present report describes inter-mission cooperative activities that are under way in several areas of the respective mandates, identifies a number of potential areas for future cooperation, including cross-border operations, examines constraints that might limit such cooperation, and provides recommendations on those activities that are considered feasible. The report also examines the major political, operational and legal implications of inter-mission cooperation and cross-border operations.

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II. Subregional context

3. The root causes, as well as the effects, of the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone are intricately linked. Restoration of durable peace in the subregion consequently requires that a number of key issues be addressed at both the national and subregional level. These include the maintenance of security and preventing the spillover of conflict between the three countries; the use of children associated with armed forces and groups; the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants; and the cross-border flow of weapons, combatants and refugees. Some of these issues are included in my progress report of 11 February 2005 on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86).

4. The presence of UNOWA, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) and United Nations peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone provides an opportunity to pursue a subregional approach to addressing these and other key issues. It also allows for enhanced coordination of political, military and humanitarian efforts, as well as for a more efficient use of logistics and administrative resources.

III. Legal, political and financial implications

5. UNOCI, UNAMSIL and UNMIL are each mandated to act under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. In accordance with their individual mandates, they can currently carry out operations only within the respective countries in which they are deployed. Therefore, in order to conduct some of the inter-mission operations identified in the present report, the Security Council would need to authorize appropriate adjustments to the mandates of the individual missions.

6. Assuming the Council were to do this, a number of political and legal considerations would need to be addressed in carrying out the envisaged inter-mission operations in which personnel from one peacekeeping force would undertake activities in one or both of the other mission areas. In this regard, such military operations would require the consent of the Governments in which the missions are deployed. In addition, troop-contributing countries would need to agree to the use of their troops and equipment in more than one mission area. Adjustments would therefore be required to the memorandums of understanding between the United Nations and troop contributors. Arrangements would also need to be made with each of the Governments concerned to extend the protection, privileges, immunities, exemptions and facilities in the missions' respective status of forces agreements to United Nations personnel and property from other missions that might be deployed or operate in the State concerned as part of inter-mission operations.

7. Financial and staffing constraints need to be taken into account in expanding subregional cooperation. Currently, budgets are mission-specific; extensive inter-mission cooperation would require significant changes to the budgetary process and budgetary estimates. Furthermore, the question of delegation of authority for subregionally managed assets and services would have to be examined. Additionally, the subregional reallocation of assets would need to be coordinated

with United Nations Headquarters so as to take into account global peacekeeping priorities and requirements.

IV. Areas of inter-mission cooperation

A. Information sharing and joint planning to support the peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

8. UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI routinely share information on political and security developments and other issues affecting the peace processes and stability within the three countries in which they are deployed. A primary means to that end is through the regular exchange of daily, weekly and monthly comprehensive situation reports, military situation reports and reports on other issues, as appropriate. UNMIL and UNAMSIL have also established joint mission analysis cells, currently staffed primarily with military personnel, which gather and analyse information to produce reports that assist in guiding the military and political strategies of the respective missions.

9. The regular meetings of my special representatives for Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and West Africa and my Representative for Guinea-Bissau, and also of those of the three force commanders, convened under the aegis of UNOWA, are important forums for assessing political and security developments and trends, and for developing integrated subregional strategies to promote peace and security within the subregion.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

10. UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI should enhance cooperation regarding information-sharing and joint strategy formulation. In this connection, the missions, together with UNOWA, will establish an inter-mission working group, which will include representatives of political affairs, military, civil affairs, civilian police, humanitarian affairs, human rights and legal affairs. Under the guidance of my special representatives, it will focus on developing long-term strategies in support of the peace processes in the three regions and coordinating joint activities. The working group will also facilitate the sharing of lessons learned regarding support to the peace processes. The working group could consider the harmonization of exit strategies of the three missions with a view to avoiding a situation in which a mission is withdrawn at a time when there is a high risk of instability because of the spillover effects of conflict in a neighbouring country.

11. The expansion of the joint mission analysis cells to include staff from the main substantive areas of a mission will lead to more effective information management, which is key to operational effectiveness in that it enables a mission to anticipate problems and plan coherently. Fully functional and inclusive joint mission analysis cells will seek information from sources within and outside of the mission. They will cross-reference the information, analyse it and produce reports and documents that inform decision-making by the senior management teams. While the establishment of a joint mission analysis cell in UNOCI will be a useful information management tool, it will prove essential for the arms embargo monitoring process.

Close coordination between the joint mission analysis cells of the three missions will facilitate monitoring of the subregional security situation including in border areas and the conduct of subregional security threat assessments. UNOWA and UNOGBIS should also be included in joint mission analysis cell activities. Once such joint mission analysis cells have been established, the benefit of setting up a regional joint mission analysis cell should be considered. Meanwhile, the inter-mission working group will coordinate and facilitate information sharing between the missions.

12. My special representatives will apprise the respective Governments of major decisions made at their meetings and consult with them, in close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on coordinated strategies to address common challenges among the three countries. In this connection, my special representatives for West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone will continue to encourage dialogue among the Mano River Union Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and also Côte d'Ivoire. The three missions, working closely with UNOWA, could also explore with the Mano River Union countries possibilities of supporting their efforts to reactivate the Union, especially with regard to the implementation of security-related confidence-building measures. Steps are being taken to further increase cooperation with ECOWAS, in joint efforts to support peace and stability in the Mano River Union and the wider West Africa subregion. In this regard, consideration is being given to the idea of deploying a liaison officer for the three missions at ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja.

13. The missions will continue to provide support to civil society groups, including interfaith organizations, women's and youth groups and human rights organizations that are working on initiatives to promote peace, security and reconciliation in the Mano River Basin countries and the wider West Africa subregion. Support could be provided for such initiatives within the respective mission areas to help build networks of activists, mobilize grass-roots support for the peace processes and the implementation of various reconciliation and confidence-building activities nationally and within the Mano River Basin.

B. Military operations

Current inter-mission cooperation activities

Liaison between the peacekeeping forces

14. Links have been established between the Force Headquarters of the three missions at various levels. Since December 2003, the UNMIL, UNAMSIL and UNOCI force commanders have met regularly. Issues discussed have included security developments and threats, contingency planning regarding security threats and the concept of an operational level subregional force reserve. An inter-mission secretariat has been established to coordinate the force commanders' meetings and follow-up actions. Liaison officers have also been exchanged between the force headquarters and mechanisms are in place for liaison and coordination between the peacekeeping forces deployed in adjacent sectors in the three countries. These include daily exchanges of information and cross-border inter-mission meetings between sector and unit commanders and military observers.

15. The regular force commanders' meetings should be coordinated with those of the special representatives to better facilitate political and military integration between the missions. As far as possible, they will also be attended by personnel from the Military Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide a Headquarters perspective and to further improve coordination. Furthermore, ways of enhancing liaison at all levels between the three force headquarters and the peacekeeping contingents in adjacent sectors will be explored.

Potential areas for cross-border military operations

16. Enhanced cooperation between the UNOCI, UNMIL and UNAMSIL forces could help improve security along the shared borders and assist the missions to more effectively address border security-related problems, including the cross-border flow of weapons and combatants. The missions could also help monitor population movements across the borders and improve the security of communities living along border areas. Such cooperation would avoid duplication of tasks, thus allowing a more optimal utilization of resources. Potential areas for cross-border operations include: "hot pursuit" operations; joint air patrols; shared border responsibility; border crossing point responsibility; and pre-planned ground operations.

17. The implementation of cross-border operations are currently subject to the constraints outlined in paragraph 6 above. Additionally, it would require training, rehearsal and exercises, and issues of command and control and clear rules of engagement would also need to be carefully addressed. The forces on the ground would also need the capacity to communicate effectively across borders. Systems would need to be in place to ensure communication between each mission's air assets and the three missions' air operations systems. Enhanced cooperation would minimize the duplication of tasks in some operational areas, thus allowing for a reduction in costs. However, such other areas as inter-mission military exercises could incur considerable financial costs. Therefore, the cost implications of such cross-border operations will need to be carefully examined. In carrying out ground operations, the movement and activities of local security forces would need to be taken into account and the political approval from the host countries will be required in the form of a memorandum of understanding.

18. *Hot pursuit.* Hot pursuit operations are defined as unplanned military movements across a border, either in response to a specific incident or where a significant tactical advantage would otherwise be missed. They are complex and high-risk operations, requiring substantial preparation. While the complexities of hot pursuit operations should not preclude further discussion, the reality is that they are not feasible in the current circumstances and other areas for inter-mission cooperation should be given priority consideration.

19. *Joint air patrols.* Air patrolling along the Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone borders is coordinated by the missions, with air assets from each mission being used to patrol the respective countries' border areas. A further step might be for air assets from one mission to be used to patrol routes spanning both sides of the border. Such joint air operations would avoid duplication of effort and reduce operational costs while also providing an effective means of monitoring, detecting and deterring illicit cross-border activity. They may require a strengthening of

communications capabilities to ensure effective communications between the air assets involved and the missions' aviation control systems.

20. *Cross-border patrols.* It is envisaged that one mission could carry out periodic, routine cross-border patrols into an adjacent area of another mission that did not have troops deployed along its side of the border. The effectiveness of such patrols would depend on available intelligence; prior coordination with the mission into whose area the patrols are deploying; clear rules of engagement and command and control arrangements; and the troops' knowledge of the situation and mandate of the adjacent mission. The use of unarmed military observers in that role might be more acceptable to the countries involved than using armed troops. The patrols could provide very useful reporting on the situation in border areas and also provide liaison with factions, local authorities and communities on the ground.

21. *Border crossing points.* United Nations military personnel are deployed to monitor activities at certain border crossing checkpoints in the countries in which the three missions are deployed. These checkpoints are usually staffed by national security agencies and are generally some distance apart on each side of the respective borders. In such cases, coordination between the personnel of two adjacent missions has generally been limited to sharing information. The effectiveness of the missions' border security operations could therefore be improved through enhanced sharing of information, available expertise and specialized resources. There are also more remote, unmanned border crossing points at which national security agencies are not present and where security operations are carried out through periodic visits by patrols.

22. *Extended areas of responsibility.* One mission could be charged with responsibility for operations in an adjacent area of a neighbouring country. Such an arrangement, in which the operational area would overlap an international border, could be foreseen in certain places along the borders between Liberia and Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. This type of operation could be used if one mission had readily available troops in a particular border area and easy access to the adjacent area in the neighbouring country over which it would have responsibility. This might be particularly advantageous when a mission was drawing down but a United Nations presence would still be beneficial in certain areas of the country. Under such arrangements, personnel from one mission could also undertake border monitoring responsibilities at checkpoints staffed with national security agencies on each side of a border.

23. *Pre-arranged, coordinated operations.* Pre-arranged, coordinated military operations in which peacekeeping troops remain in their respective mission areas on adjacent sides of a border, while coordinating their activities, are particularly useful for tasks such as monitoring and deterring illegal cross-border activities, including the illegal flow of small arms. Steps should be taken jointly by the missions to organize such operations. In this regard, the deployment on both sides of the border of troops of the same nationality has proved to be particularly advantageous, as it facilitates the planning and ability to communicate in real time. For example, Pakistani troops are currently deployed in some areas along both sides of the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia, and Senegalese troops are deployed in border areas along the Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire border. When it is not possible to deploy troops from the same country on both sides of a border, troops from similar units (for example infantry units) and capability and who share a common language,

should be used. In all cases, such operations must be closely and effectively coordinated with local security forces.

24. *Establishment of a subregional reserve force.* UNMIL and UNAMSIL currently each have their own integral force level reserves, which can be quickly deployed into areas where there is little or no permanently deployed United Nations military presence. In the case of UNOCI, the force reserve continues to be provided by the French Licorne force. The issue of a subregional operational level reserve force, based in one mission but able to deploy to operate in all three mission areas, needs to be pursued. Establishment of such a flexible force could have a considerable impact in crisis situations, and could provide a strong United Nations presence in areas where it otherwise would have a limited or no troop presence. The establishment of regional operational-level reserve force would require considerable flexibility in terms of the mandate given to the troops involved, as well as agreement from troop contributors for their troops to be used in cross-border operations and the agreement of the States to which the force might be deployed. Specialized troops with particular training or equipment would probably be required if, as required, their deployment were to have an immediate impact. An operational "hub" that could act as a centre for command and control would need to be established in the lead mission.

25. The effectiveness of such a reserve force would depend on the capacity to rapidly deploy it. The three missions currently lack the capacity to move a subregional reserve in a timely and effective manner. Furthermore, the costs of the training and conduct of exercises by such a force, as well as the maintenance of its logistical support in each of the three mission areas, would be considerable.

26. In consultation with the Governments concerned, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, the missions will continue to explore the practicalities and benefits of these various potential areas for cooperation and assess how the constraints identified might be addressed.

C. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and arms control measures

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

27. The United Nations presences in West Africa have made progress towards harmonizing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in the subregion. Workshops to help develop a regional plan for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration were held in Dakar on 21 May and on 5 and 6 August 2004 and were attended by representatives of the three peacekeeping missions, UNOWA, UNOGBIS, United Nations agencies and development partners. There was general agreement on the need for a subregional, harmonized approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that take into account specific local political, economic and social factors. A third meeting focusing on a regional approach towards the implementation of the reintegration component in post-conflict situations is planned for April 2005.

28. Areas identified for inter-mission cooperation in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes included harmonization of planning and agreement on policies and eligibility criteria for special groups such as foreign

armed combatants and women and children associated with armed forces. It was also agreed that international standards and protocols, such as the Cape Town Principles and Best Practice on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, must be applied when formulating programme policies.

29. Furthermore, it was recognized that there was a need to synchronize eligibility criteria on the type of weapons surrendered to qualify for inclusion in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; policies on weapons handling and destruction; and the production and sharing of data regarding surrendered weaponry. The meetings also provided a very useful opportunity for sharing lessons learned.

30. An important area for inter-mission cooperation is in the repatriation of foreign ex-combatants, including children associated with armed forces and groups. There are some 435 Liberian ex-combatants in Sierra Leone and over 600 foreign combatants from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone awaiting repatriation from Liberia. Agreements between the respective Governments, agencies and organizations involved are required for the repatriation and reintegration process. To this end, UNMIL is working with the National Transitional Government of Liberia in developing memorandums of understanding with neighbouring countries for the repatriation of adult foreign combatants. Between 12 and 16 January 2005, UNMIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) facilitated the visit of a National Transitional Government of Liberia team to Sierra Leone to discuss an agreement on the repatriation of Liberian ex-combatants. UNMIL and UNAMSIL are also working closely with the United Nations country teams and other partners in the subregion to facilitate the repatriation and resettlement of other foreign ex-combatants.

31. The harmonization of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes will also benefit from an agreement among the United Nations system on a common, overarching concept of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Policy and Best Practices Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is coordinating the production of United Nations guidelines for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations. These guidelines, which are to be issued later in 2005, should be used by all missions. However, the latter must also take into account the varying political, social and economic contexts in which the programmes are being carried out.

32. Concern has been voiced over the cross-border movement of armed combatants attracted by reintegration opportunities offered in neighbouring countries. One solution put forward has been to harmonize the compensation packages offered to combatants. These tend to vary from country to country as they take into account country-specific variables such as local costs of living and average salaries. They also differ in terms of the mixture of cash payment and other services offered, for instance, vocational training or education. Close harmonization of these country-specific initiatives will therefore be difficult. It may be more realistic to ensure that the eligibility criteria used to access the national programmes are more widely disseminated and strictly applied so as to dissuade foreign combatants from moving into a country in false anticipation that they will be accepted into the disarmament programme there.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

33. The three missions are encouraged to increase their sharing of experiences in planning and implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. They will continue to work closely with Governments and partners in the region to support the repatriation of foreign ex-combatants, including women and children formerly associated with armed forces. They should also continue to pursue the development of a harmonized, subregional approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, while taking into account national social, economic and political contexts.

D. Combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons

Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

34. The missions will work together to develop and share information relating to small arms and light weapons, including information on types and country of origin of weapons collected, arms flows and small arms and light weapons control programmes in each mission area. Such information should also be shared with the ECOWAS small arms control programme when it is launched later in 2005. In collaboration with ECOWAS and UNOWA, the missions could, through advocacy, training and support, assist the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone to develop appropriate national legislation and border security mechanisms to counter the illegal cross-border movement and use of small arms and light weapons. UNMIL and UNOCI are also working on modalities for cooperation regarding the monitoring of the arms embargo imposed on Côte d'Ivoire under Security Council resolution 1572 (2004) of 15 November 2004.

35. Following the completion of disarmament and demobilization in Sierra Leone, the Government and civil society organizations, with support from UNAMSIL and UNDP, implemented a community arms collection and destruction programme. This has resulted in the collection of significant numbers of small arms and light weapons from communities, which in return benefited from development assistance. Similar programmes are being considered in Liberia and would be beneficial in Côte d'Ivoire.

E. Civilian police operations

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

36. Cooperation between UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI in the area of civilian police operations has focused mainly on information sharing and exchanging lessons learned. In this connection, UNAMSIL civilian police personnel undertook a two-week assessment mission to Liberia and UNMIL civilian police officers visited the police training school at Hastings in Sierra Leone, where they were provided with material on basic recruit training. Additionally, the officers met with Sierra Leone police personnel to discuss issues relevant for the development of strategies by the UNMIL civilian police component.

37. To facilitate collaboration on addressing cross-border problems, UNAMSIL and UNMIL civilian police organized a visit by UNAMSIL civilian police commissioner and a Sierra Leone police delegation to Monrovia to meet with

Liberian national police personnel in April 2004 to begin the establishment of mechanisms for joint planning and the sharing of information. Following the visit, the need for the two countries to stem trafficking in drugs, persons, diamonds and scarce commodities, as well as cross-border arms proliferation was identified. Sierra Leone and Liberia were also urged to address security concerns related to the movement of refugees and to meet police training needs.

38. Furthermore, UNAMSIL organized, together with UNMIL civilian police personnel, a workshop on the standards of conduct and disciplinary procedures in United Nations peacekeeping missions in April 2004. With regard to scientific criminal investigations, UNAMSIL has provided officers from UNMIL civilian police Major Crime Section and from the Liberian national police with assistance in the scientific analysis of suspected illegal narcotics. Furthermore, UNMIL civilian police and the Legal and Judicial System Support Division assisted the Special Court for Sierra Leone when its Chief Prosecutor visited Liberia to collect evidence.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

39. The sharing of lessons learned, information and technical expertise between the three missions should be increased. Inter-mission visits by civilian police personnel and personnel from national police services and the organization of workshops on key issues would help strengthen the capacity of the civilian police to assist in the reform and restructuring of national police services.

40. The missions should work closely together to promote integrated policing and collaboration between national police forces when dealing with cross-border issues. Furthermore, they should provide technical support and advice for the harmonization of national police policies and practices in the subregion and seek to strengthen the capacity of national police forces to gather and share information.

41. The missions will also work to strengthen national programmes that address the illegal exploitation and cross-border movement of natural resources, including diamonds and timber, and trafficking in drugs and small arms and light weapons. Initiatives could include providing technical support and advice in harmonizing national policies and practices on these issues and, capacity-building of Government institutions.

42. The three peacekeeping missions, in collaboration with UNOWA and UNOGBIS, should study the possibility of cooperating with and drawing on the expertise of international or subregional police mechanisms such as Interpol or the West African Police Chiefs Committee, an institution operating within the framework of ECOWAS, under which member States consult on security-related issues.

F. Human rights

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

43. In July 2004, so as to assist in the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission for Liberia, UNAMSIL assisted UNMIL in organizing a workshop in Monrovia on the role of truth commissions in transitional justice and peacebuilding. The three missions regularly exchange information on human rights issues and the activities of non-governmental organizations working in that field and collaborate in

training programmes, for instance on sexual exploitation and abuse. At the request of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNAMSIL sent a senior human rights officer to work with the International Commission of Inquiry established to investigate human rights violations committed in Côte d'Ivoire between September 2002 and October 2004.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

44. UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI will share monthly reports and other relevant information on their respective programmes and activities. The missions will continue to share strategies and experiences in the fields of monitoring, reporting and other areas of their mandates, including through periodic meetings of human rights officers to strengthen the missions' capacity to address the variety of human rights challenges they are facing.

45. UNOCI and UNMIL could benefit from UNAMSIL experiences in helping to establish and assist in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Human Rights Commission in Sierra Leone. Moreover, it would be most useful if they could facilitate the sharing of lessons learned between the former commissioners on the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the future truth and reconciliation commissioners in Liberia. There should also be increased collaboration regarding women's and gender issues.

46. The human rights sections of the three missions will exchange experiences in training and capacity-building for police, corrections and army personnel, in areas including human rights and the administration of justice, women's rights, gender mainstreaming and sexual and gender-based violence, and strengthening national human rights protection systems.

47. Civil society activities throughout the subregion should also be further supported by sharing information on advocacy, sensitization and training strategies with civil society organizations on issues including democracy, good governance and human rights. The strengthening of civil society organizations that promote human rights and good governance in West Africa could help consolidate peace and subregional stability.

G. Child protection

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

48. UNAMSIL and UNMIL work closely together with the United Nations Children's Fund and child protection non-governmental organizations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as with the ECOWAS Child Protection Adviser, to assist with the repatriation of Sierra Leonean children associated with armed forces and groups in Liberia and Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugee children. Furthermore, the UNAMSIL Child Protection Unit provided pre-deployment training for UNMIL and UNOCI military components and shared with the other missions the lessons learned from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children in Sierra Leone.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

49. The sharing by the peacekeeping missions of information and expertise on child protection issues, including the recruitment, use and movement of children associated with armed forces and groups in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, should be improved. This will help increase the missions' capacity in child protection, including monitoring, investigation, documentation and reporting on abuses against children, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation; integration of child rights and protection into the training curricula of the national armies and police forces; juvenile justice in post-conflict scenarios; protection of children in transitional justice mechanisms, such as special courts and truth commissions; and the training of mission components.

50. It should be recalled that in its resolution 1539 (2004) of 22 April 2004, the Security Council requested that a monitoring and reporting mechanism be established to provide it with timely information on abuses against children in conflict situations, in particular their recruitment and use in armed forces and groups. Enhanced cooperation between the three missions and United Nations country teams in the respective countries will be critical in the development and implementation of such a mechanism.

H. Humanitarian assistance

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

51. The three Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, who also act as humanitarian coordinators, are facilitating interaction between UNAMSIL, UNMIL, UNOCI and the humanitarian community on issues of common interest, such as planning for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees, the resettlement of internally displaced persons and the rehabilitation of demobilized ex-combatants. Issues of access to populations in need through cross-border initiatives are also being discussed by the missions in close collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian agencies. Furthermore, contingency planning has been undertaken for any sudden influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. For example, in the light of the unstable situation in Côte d'Ivoire, the UNMIL Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General responsible for humanitarian coordination established a working group on contingency planning in order to respond effectively to any outflow of people from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia. The planning was put into practice when UNMIL helped provide assistance to several thousand Ivorian refugees who crossed over into Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in early November 2004 as a result of the resurgence of violence in that country. Furthermore, joint border patrols helped in restoring the local population's confidence in their security and prevented additional population outflows. The missions also cooperated during the evacuation from Côte d'Ivoire in early November when UNMIL was instrumental in the evacuation and subsequent return of humanitarian workers, thus facilitating the resumption of emergency activities in the country.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

52. The peacekeeping missions are mandated to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and should support cross-border operations, including through the use of their logistic assets.

53. A further improvement in information exchange between the missions in the area of humanitarian and development assistance would be beneficial. Sharing lessons learned and best practices between mission personnel and also with the wider humanitarian community in the three countries would be especially useful. This should be done by an increased exchange of reports and also through regular meetings of mission staff. Enhanced cooperation in joint planning on subregional humanitarian issues would also be beneficial.

54. Given the subregional dimension of internal displacement and also the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, inter-mission efforts should also focus on mobilizing resources to effectively address these important issues.

I. Civil affairs

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

55. The sharing of information and lessons learned between missions has facilitated the work of civil affairs and electoral units in UNAMSIL and UNMIL which are tasked with assisting in the restoration of State authority throughout the respective mission areas. In this connection, UNAMSIL helped elaborate the role of the UNMIL Civil Affairs Section. UNAMSIL also temporarily deployed experienced staff to share lessons learned on a range of issues including: restoration and extension of State authority; resolution of property disputes; resolution of inter-chiefdom conflicts; and promoting good governance.

56. The UNAMSIL Electoral Unit has shared with UNMIL experience gained from assisting with the elections in Sierra Leone. The reassignment of a small number of UNAMSIL electoral staff to UNMIL in 2004 assisted in starting up the UNMIL Electoral Unit. UNAMSIL and UNMIL are also planning a joint capacity-building programme for electoral commissions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

57. Information sharing between the civil affairs components in the three missions should be increased, particularly in the fields of restoration and extension of State authority, resolution of administrative boundary disputes, as well as promoting national recovery. This could include reviewing the management of national resources through mechanisms such as the Development Partnership Committee and the Steering Committee on Diamonds, which are forums that have functioned well in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the missions should seek ways and means to promote a curriculum for schools that would teach education for peace and good citizenship.

58. Consultations among the three missions' components, including civilian police, public information and military and administration, should also be expedited to increase inter-mission cooperation relating to the provision of electoral assistance.

J. Rule of law

Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

59. There are major challenges in the administration of justice and rule of law in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Enhanced inter-mission cooperation could contribute to reforming and improving the legal and judicial institutions in the three countries. In this context, the three missions should continue to encourage the respective Governments to initiate legal reform programmes and promote cooperation and mutual assistance between Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, especially regarding cross-border issues, including trafficking in persons; trafficking in drugs and small arms and light weapons; the smuggling of natural resources; and the use of children associated with armed forces and groups.

60. UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI could also jointly facilitate and support strengthening of judicial and prosecutorial cooperation between the three countries. To that end, the missions could review existing extradition treaties and support cooperation in the extradition process. Similarly, they should continue to encourage the respective Governments to initiate legal reform programmes that promote cooperation and mutual assistance between the three countries.

61. The missions could also cooperate in arranging training programmes for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers that would address common issues and problems and would help to forge links between each country's national legal and judicial institutions, with the aim of strengthening the rule of law in the subregion.

K. Public information

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

62. The public information sections of the three missions are in close contact and regularly exchange information. UNAMSIL has frequently deployed its video team to support the activities of the UNMIL's Public Information Unit and this team has prepared features for UNMIL, including documentaries on the start-up and deployment of the mission, as well as producing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sensitization materials. Each mission has a radio station and collaboration in this sphere has been under way since their establishment. The missions' radio stations operate under guidelines similar to those of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information and in many cases address similar socio-political challenges.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

63. Joint community outreach programmes focusing on the populations in the border areas could be developed among the three missions, providing the human and technical resources are available. Given the shared cultural affinity of the peoples of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and particularly their similar experiences of

conflict, the missions should be able to exchange local language radio programmes. The missions' public information sections should also establish a task force to disseminate information on inter-mission cooperation and cross-border issues.

L. Administration and logistics

1. Current inter-mission cooperation activities

64. Sharing logistic support between the three missions can contribute significantly towards increasing their efficiency while reducing operational costs. For the deployment of UNMIL, the proximity of UNAMSIL (and to some extent the then United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI)) was a critical deployment enabler. Cooperation in this area began in August 2003 when Nigerian troops were deployed from UNAMSIL to UNMIL using UNAMSIL air assets. This was followed by a similar deployment of Bangladeshi troops. Moreover, UNAMSIL supplied the UNMIL Nigerian battalion with such United Nations assets as logistic support equipment and supplies. UNAMSIL also provided the Bangladeshi battalion with water purification equipment and generators.

65. During the start-up phase of UNMIL, UNAMSIL staff on short-term assignments also assisted UNMIL in several areas, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and infrastructure development, information technology and communications, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), engineering, transport, supply, movement control and aviation staff.

66. The missions are already sharing a range of support services, as well as procurement assistance and air operations support. With the approval of United Nations Headquarters, and in line with United Nations regulations, the three missions make use of each other's civilian aircraft. Additionally, there is cooperation regarding medical assistance, including medical evacuation flights and the provision of medical attention at respective mission's facilities. Finally, a coastal vessel contracted by UNMIL is being used for the movement of freight and personnel between the three missions. In the November 2004 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, UNMIL provided UNOCI with assistance, particularly the use of air assets to relocate staff temporarily from Abidjan to Accra and subsequently facilitate their return.

67. To benefit from the existing cadre of institutional memory and regional expertise, the three missions already share the services of staff members, and experienced personnel are used to conduct cross-mission training. In this connection, UNAMSIL conducted pre-deployment training for the UNOCI and UNMIL military staff and observers before their deployment in the respective mission areas. It must of course be remembered that each mission's budget is independently authorized by the General Assembly, to be used exclusively for the specific tasks mandated by the Security Council. This effectively prohibits the free transfer of personnel, equipment and services between missions. It is therefore necessary for all such inter-mission assistance to be based on a cost reimbursement principle, through the inter-mission billing system.

2. Areas for future inter-mission cooperation

68. A number of steps could be taken to further enhance the already existing collaboration among the missions. Options for further study include interregional air safety operations and aviation weather forecasting services. In addition, there may be scope to consolidate the GIS units of the missions and to share electronic data resources and specific geographic information. Joint inter-mission GIS efforts on terrain analysis, in particular for the border areas, will be crucial to support effectively possible cross-border operations.

69. The crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2004, when UNOCI staff had to be evacuated, highlighted the importance and need to share logistical assets, especially air assets. On that occasion, as in previous crisis situations in other missions, the operation was controlled directly from United Nations Headquarters. It should be possible to achieve similar effectiveness on a regular basis through subregional control of air assets. However, this would require major changes in the way in which mission air assets are managed. In the case of air assets provided by troop contributors, prior agreement to their use in other missions would also be required. Likewise, a theatre air plan would be essential for a coordinated evacuation, reinforcement, or move of mission or subregional reserves. This would also require the regionalization of aviation safety functions and possible central control of assets in one mission.

70. Current logistic cooperation would greatly benefit from the establishment of joint planning groups, to develop terms of reference and logistics support plans. This would facilitate the sharing of resources and logistic support assets. A forward staging area to support the three peacekeeping missions, UNOWA and UNOGBIS would also be beneficial. In view of the UNAMSIL drawdown, UNMIL would be most suitable and has already been earmarked for that purpose. A forward staging area in Monrovia would play an important role in overall coordination, local inventory management and regional utilization of assets, while serving as the primary regional asset depot. However, a regional reallocation of assets must be coordinated with and authorized by United Nations Headquarters so as to take into account global peacekeeping priorities and requirements.

71. The proposed cross-border operations would require appropriate adjustments to the insurance coverage of the missions. Worldwide third party automobile liability insurance, which is provided for all United Nations-owned vehicles in the respective missions, supplemented by the mandatory local vehicle liability coverage appropriate for each mission, is country- and area-specific. The introduction and implementation of many of the proposed inter-mission logistical measures, including the use of shared air and maritime assets, supplies and equipment and medical facilities and expertise would need to be formalized by way of agreements between the respective countries and signing of memorandums of understanding with non-United Nations organizations.

72. The three missions will continue to support each other's operations, including through staff exchanges and sharing of equipment and services, whenever possible. Furthermore, regular meetings could be held between the heads of the administration components of the missions to explore further areas of cooperation and to discuss modalities in that regard.

V. Observations

73. The international community is determined to assist West African countries in resolving existing conflicts and consolidate peace in the region. The United Nations has contributed considerably in this regard by establishing major peacekeeping operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and UNOGBIS and UNOWA. Current United Nations commitments in the region exceed some 24,000 troops, 1,400 civilian police personnel and 3,000 civilian personnel.

74. The dividends from this huge human and material investment could be expanded if used as a part of a broad regional strategy guided by the international community. I am therefore requesting my Special Representatives for Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, my Special Representative for West Africa, as well as my Representative for Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations offices and country teams in the subregion to continue to expand their common efforts to ensure that progress is made in implementing their mandates and bringing durable peace to the region.

75. The cooperative efforts outlined in the present report, which have been established and strengthened over the past months by the offices and missions involved, provide a solid foundation on which to build and expand the impact of the United Nations presence in West Africa. As described in the report, the United Nations has already seen considerable sharing of resources and expertise among the missions most notably through:

(a) UNAMSIL assistance in establishing UNMIL, including in the redeployment of troops from UNAMSIL to UNMIL;

(b) The sharing of logistical assets between the missions that facilitated the establishment of UNOCI and UNMIL and allowed some savings;

(c) The sharing of experienced military, civilian and civilian police staff and the regular exchange of information and lessons learned;

(d) The regular meetings of my special representatives, representatives, force commanders and others and the sharing of lessons learned and development of joint strategies.

76. However, much more can be done to create additional synergies between the missions and other United Nations presences and improve their capacities to implement their respective mandates, while ensuring that the operations are as cost effective as possible. In addition to the formalization of a number of ongoing cooperative activities among missions, offices and other presences, several practical steps should be taken in order to further strengthen cooperation between United Nations missions and offices in West Africa. These include:

(a) The establishment of an operational level subregional reserve force;

(b) The sharing of regional air assets, the establishment of a subregional air plan and the regionalization of aviation safety functions;

(c) The undertaking of routine pre-planned operations along borders, including coordination of activities at crossing points. The possibility of joint air patrolling should also be investigated;

(d) The establishment in UNMIL and UNAMSIL of fully integrated joint mission analysis cells. Serious consideration should be given to establishing a joint

mission analysis cell in UNOCI and a subregional joint mission analysis cell that would include UNOWA and UNOGBIS;

(e) The harmonization of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and agreement among the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and among the country teams, on a common, overarching concept of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration;

(f) The establishment of a forward staging area to support the three peacekeeping missions, UNOWA and UNOGBIS, provide overall logistic coordination and serve as the primary subregional asset depot.

77. However, the implementation of a number of inter-mission cooperative activities is currently constrained by several legal, managerial, budgetary, political and operational considerations. It will take much determination at several levels to overcome these hurdles and to implement the recommendations made in this report:

(a) It is recommended that the Security Council consider making the necessary adjustments to the mandates of the missions and offices in West Africa to allow cross-border operations. The Council will also need to help to generate the necessary political support for some of the cross-border initiatives listed above to take place;

(b) Accordingly, the approval of the General Assembly would be needed for the associated increase in budgetary flexibility;

(c) Troop and civilian police-contributing countries should be encouraged to consider granting, and indicating in their agreed arrangements with the United Nations, their permission for personnel and equipment to be used within West Africa and not just in one mission area. This will require a consequent renegotiation of the memorandums of understanding between troop- and police-contributing countries and the United Nations. Countries contributing troops and civilian police must also be prepared to make available troops and officers trained and equipped to plan and participate in cross-border operations, including for use in a rapid reaction operational regional reserve;

(d) West African States are encouraged to give their approval for United Nations operations in the area for the purposes described above, in particular with regard to cross-border movements and operations conducted by United Nations personnel;

(e) Furthermore, the West African States should be actively supported in their desire to promote regional solutions to the crisis. Additional consideration should therefore be given to building the capacity and further improving the efficiency of the ECOWAS and Mano River Union secretariats.

78. While the above agenda will require persistent effort, its impact would be considerable. The benefits would conceivably stretch beyond West Africa as similar principles of inter-mission cooperation could be applied wherever there are other contiguous United Nations presences. The application of United Nations assets in a flexible manner could therefore provide a potent tool for advancing peace processes, and promoting economic recovery, democracy and sustainable development in West Africa and beyond.